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TREND TOWARD ONE-MAN POLICE CARS

To what extent do police departments use one-man patrol cars and what are the advantages of this plan?

A total of 151 cities over 10,000 population, or 18 per cent, of the 840 cities whose police chiefs reported to the Municipal Year Book late in 1946, use one-man cars exclusively; 384 cities, or nearly 46 per cent of the reporting cities, use both one and two-man patrol cars; while 305 cities, or 36 per cent, use only two-man patrol cars. Three-fourths of the 151 cities using one-man cars exclusively are in the 10,000 to 25,000 population group. Of the 92 cities over 100,000, six use one-man cars exclusively, 34 use both one and two-man cars, 48 use only two-man cars, and the practice of four cities is unknown. Thus a growing number of cities use one-man police cars exclusively and it is interesting to note that nearly 64 per cent of the 840 reporting cities make use of some one-man patrol cars.

The cities over 100,000 using one-man patrol cars exclusively on all three shifts are Austin and San Antonio, Texas; Hartford, Connecticut; Berkeley, California; Wichita, Kansas; and Reading, Pennsylvania. A number of other cities use more one-man than two-man cars on all shifts. Rochester, New York, for example, uses one-man cars exclusively on the daytime and evening shifts, and on the graveyard shift has 16 one-man cars and four two-man cars. Cincinnati, Ohio, has an average of 31 cars on each shift manned by one-man and an average of 18 cars on each shift manned by two men. Philadelphia has 121 one-man cars on the day shift, and an average of 105 such cars on each of the other two shifts. Denver, Oakland, and San Francisco, use one-man cars exclusively on the day shift and to some extent on the other shifts. Other large cities that make extensive use of one-man cars are Columbus, Ohio; Dallas, Texas; St. Paul, Minnesota; Pasadena and San Diego, California; Syracuse, New York; and New Haven, Connecticut.

Smaller cities which use one-man patrol cars exclusively include Colorado Springs and Greeley, Colorado; Chicopee and Fitchburg, Massachusetts; Cranston and East Providence, Rhode Island; Cumberland, Maryland; Bangor, Maine; Fond du Lac, Wisconsin; Hackensack and Teaneck, New Jersey; Mason City, Iowa; Meriden, New Britain, and West Haven, Connecticut; Newport News, Virginia; Tucson, Arizona; Elmira, Niagara Falls, Poughkeepsie, and Watertown, New York; Albany, California; Ames, Iowa; Astoria, Oregon; Manchester, New Hampshire; and McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Saginaw, Michigan, uses one-man cars exclusively on day and evening shifts and six or seven two-man and one one-man cars on the graveyard shift.

In addition, five cities have changed over to one-man cars on some or all shifts in 1946: Phoenix, Arizona; Beverly Hills, California; Ogden, Utah; Eugene, Oregon; and St. Petersburg, Florida. In the latter city, for example, all cars on the day and evening shifts are one-man, and two two-man cars are used on the graveyard shift. More detailed information will appear in the 1947 Municipal Year Book.

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Arguments Against One-Man Cars. The chief objection to the one-man car, it is claimed, is that one officer is needed to watch the car and to support the officer making an investigation in case of unexpected trouble, and also to monitor the radio and recall the other officer should a more important call be received. Another reason given is that the second man is needed to protect the equipment, such as shotguns and gas bombs carried in the car. Some police officials say two men are needed because at times one man tries doors and checks alleys while the other drives. The personal danger factor is also stressed by some officers who feel that a single man in a car is exposing himself to unnecessary risk in apprehending persons wanted or suspected.

Some chiefs prefer that two uniformed patrolmen ride together in order that more adequate manpower may be available in an emergency. The extra may be dropped for a half hour or more at a time to do foot patrol. At the end of the period he may take the wheel and his partner go on foot. The advocates of this plan maintain that it distributes the burden and keeps the men on the alert. In some cases the second patrolman may be in citizen's dress to carry on inspection work in conjunction with the auto patrol. Another poor but occasional argument is that many chiefs and other top officers as well as the rank and file just do not like the one-man car idea. Finally, the men may not be qualified or trained to do single-handed patrol work.

Specialists Approve One-Man Car. The specialists and leaders in the police field have been recommending for years that cities adopt the one-man car plan. Here is some evidence:

J. M. Leonard (formerly with Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research): In a survey of the Cleveland police department for the Citizens' League of Cleveland in 1944, he said: "If the old plan of a one-man foot patrol proved adequate in its day, as it seems to have done, there is really no valid reason why a one-man zone car patrol with its two-way radio connection should not prove adequate. The director of public safety sometime ago ordered the tryout of a one-man zone car in zone 425 with entirely satisfactory results. There has been no increase in crime and no difficulties in giving the zone adequate protection. The inspector in charge of uniform patrol is in sympathy with one-man operation. Its gradual adoption in Cleveland is recommended by the Research Bureau, to be installed as rapidly as a backlog of experience can be acquired to sustain its use under local conditions."

Bruce Smith (Institute of Public Administration, New York): In a survey of the St. Louis police department in 1942, made for the Governmental Research Institute of that city, he recommended that: "The two-man crew in patrol cars during the first platoon (7 A.M. to 3 P.M.) be reduced to one man, and that one-man crews for two or even all platoons in the quiet residential districts be given a thorough trial. The saving in manpower in the first change outlined above, with necessary allowances for replacement will be approximately 48 men for other police assignments."

In his survey report on the New Orleans police department made in 1946 for the Bureau of Governmental Research of that city, Mr. Smith said: "With increased flexibility of motor resources, two or more one-man cars can be dispatched by radio to the scene of any crime or other occurrence, thereby delivering sufficient manpower to handle the situation. American cities have been slow to adopt one-man car crews. In police practice throughout the country two-men crews are employed four times more frequently than are one-man crews, but the trend towards the latter is unmistakable."

Public Administration Service, Chicago: During the past 10 years PAS has surveyed numerous police departments, including those of Hartford, Connecticut, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the Minneapolis report, for example, the use of one-man patrol cars is recommended in place of the two-man system now in effect. The report states: "Records of cities which use one-man patrol cars indicate that one officer in an automobile is more efficient than two. Over-emphasis of the emergency nature of motorized patrol has been the reason for the assignment of more than one officer to a car."

August Vollmer (formerly police chief at Berkeley, California, later professor of police administration, University of California): In a survey of the Minneapolis police department in 1930 Chief Vollmer stated: "Attention is called to the fact that the practice of placing two men in a car is not necessary. It has been demonstrated over a period of 15 years that one man in the car is more efficient than two....With modern signal devices, and especially with the use of the radio more than one officer can be dispatched to the scene of the crime in emergencies." In the Wickersham commission report on police he stated: "Two patrolmen in car, or a patrolman and chauffeur, have been found unsatisfactory in many cities. There is too much opportunity for discussion between the men and considerable lack of observation of what is going on in the beat. Putting two men in a car tends to make them careless, inefficient, and lazy."

O. W. Wilson (former police chief at Wichita, Kansas, and professor of police administration, University of California): In numerous surveys of police departments he has recommended one-man cars (see below for statement quoted from Wilson).

One-Man Patrol Cars Best. Experience has proved that two-man cars are not necessary in daylight hours. The trend in the more progressive police departments is to use one-man cars exclusively or at least to reduce the car crews to one man on all shifts in residential districts and to use one-man cars in all districts in the daylight hours.

Under all ordinary police patrol conditions the one-man auto patrol is considered adequate. Improved police communications, particularly the two-way radio and more recently the three-way radio, has removed any real arguments against one-man patrol operations. The fact that patrol cars have direct radio communication with commanding officers enables them to converge on a given spot with no loss of time. One-man cars operating in smaller districts have a greater crime prevention value and render greater police service than can be performed by two men in a car. The officer can report out-of-service at certain locations when he needs to inspect on foot certain buildings, parks, alleys, playgrounds. The reasons why a patrolman operating by himself in an automobile is more efficient than when he has a brother officer with him were set forth as follows in the April, 1940, issue of Public Management by O. W. Wilson.

"Emergency equipment such as shotguns and bombs are seldom used and the patrolling mobile patrols usually carry it. For this reason it is not necessary that zone cars be thus equipped, especially when such equipment is readily available by radio call.

"There is a tendency to lose sight of the fact that a motorized patrolman is still a patrolman. Patrolmen have operated on foot in this country for many years. Except in isolated and exceptional cases, they have performed their functions alone, unaccompanied by a second officer. Except in

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unusual situations, the question of the advisability of having two foot patrolmen operate together has not been raised.

"With the advent of the automobile, the character and complexity of the police job changed somewhat. Criminals who had previously operated on foot took advantage of this new transportation device and motorized themselves. Obviously the police would be at a tremendous handicap in dealing with the motorized criminal unless they also were motorized. In addition, it was found that a much more effective job of patrolling could be accomplished by motorizing the patrolmen: a larger patrol area can be supervised; the officer can move from one section of his district to another with regularity and ease; emergencies requiring his attention can be reached in a minimum time; the motorized officer is in a definitely better position to pursue the criminal who is motorized.

"The automobile has diminished much of the discomfort and inconvenience in the performance of the patrolman's job: it provides protection during inclement weather; with the use of radio, it provides continuous communication with headquarters; and it represents a mobile police headquarters. Why should a patrolman who operates alone on foot find it necessary to have a brother officer with him when he is supplied with many added conveniences? If he was able to do the job satisfactorily alone before, should he not be able to do it equally well or even better when equipped with the most modern means of transportation and communication? The answer is that one man in a car can patrol more efficiently than two men, and also that he can operate more safely.

"1. Let us assume that the city has available 10 men for patrol duty during a particular shift. If the men operate in pairs, the city is divided into five patrol areas. If they operate singly, the city will be divided into 10 districts, each only half as large. Twice the patrol service is thus provided; a police car gives twice the attention to the district; a given police hazard is inspected or passed during a tour of duty twice as many times as it would be if there were only half as many units. Further, the factor of safety is somewhat dependent on the availability of a larger number of patrol units.

"2. The officer patrolling alone is also more efficient for the reason that he gives first attention to police duties. When together, two officers spend part of their time visiting, swapping stories, and neglecting their regular routine duties. Further, there is greater temptation for them to be involved in small delinquencies and infractions of the rules. When one makes a suggestion which is slightly out of line, the other is inclined to fall into the spirit of the mischief, not wanting to be considered a spoil-sport. The officer making the suggestion may not have been completely serious at the time, but on finding himself "taken up" he is not able to back down and still save face.

"An officer patrolling by himself in a car is actually safer than when accompanied by a brother officer. The presence of the second officer discourages a reasonable caution for the reason that pride prevents an officer from taking suitable precautions lest his brother officer interpret his caution as cowardice. Also, each gives the other a false sense of courage out of proportion to the added protection provided by the second man. When an officer is alone in a patrol car he knows that he has no one else to rely upon in the event of trouble. Consequently, he is cautious in stepping into dangerous situations and is better prepared to take care of unexpected emergencies."

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During a nine-year period prior to 1928 in Wichita, Kansas, Mr. Wilson reports nine policemen lost their lives as a result of gunfire. In practically every case the officer was one of a pair of officers. In only two instances did the second officer succeed in killing or apprehending the assailant. In the 12 years from 1928 to 1940 Wichita policemen operated alone in cars (and still do), and during this time only one policeman was killed as the result of gunfire and he was a foot patrolman killed in a rooming house.

Conclusion. The extent to which one-man patrol cars can be used in a given city depends a great deal upon the caliber and attitude of the police chief and top officers toward the one-man patrol method, as well as upon the qualifications and attitude of the men themselves. Departments with progressive and well-trained men can change over rather quickly to the one-man car plan because the officer personnel of such departments will quickly see the advantages of this plan. But where this is not the case it is necessary that the top officers and men should be sold on the idea and the men gradually trained in methods of operating under the one-man plan. Perhaps this can best be done by experimenting with one-man cars on the daytime shift and gradually installing the plan as the men are trained.

One-man cars should first be used on the daytime shift and later on the evening shift up until 9 P.M., or perhaps midnight. It may not be desirable in some neighborhoods in some cities to use one-man cars on the graveyard shift. When officers are placed alone in automobiles, it is important that they be carefully trained in the proper technique of stopping suspicious cars in order to minimize the danger to themselves. Incidently, this is true also of two-man operation. Many chiefs think it is advisable to have the police cars equipped with a spotlight or floodlight with which to illuminate the interior of the car being stopped. It is of course highly desirable that the police cars be equipped with two-way radios.

The value of one-man cars can be readily demonstrated. In many cities perhaps two-thirds of the calls are for relatively simple police services--accidents, sick people, investigations, fires, etc. About one-half of the remaining third consists of investigations, possible arrests, drunks, fights, family trouble, and similar action. About one-half of these (or about one-sixth of the total) are minors, and one police officer can readily handle them. The remaining calls, or about one-sixth of the total constitute more serious cases. The majority of serious cases are known to the dispatcher before a car is sent to the scene and he can and should dispatch more than one car in such cases. Should he not dispatch enough assistance, additional officers may be readily summoned by two-way radio from a car at the scene. It is for these reasons that one-man operation is growing in favor in the United States.

Adequate police service to a city is far more expensive with two-man crews, which should not be used unless they are actually necessary. In relatively few situations is their use actually necessary. Necessity should, insofar as possible, be based on facts, not general opinion. Perhaps one general rule which may be applied is that if an area is so difficult to police that officers on foot must work in pairs, then two-man crews may be used. Another situation which exists in some areas in the largest cities of the country is the excessive height of buildings and acute traffic congestion where two-man crews may be used only because mobility is severely impaired. These situations are relatively very rare in the United States.

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As to cost, two men in two cars can provide about twice the coverage that two men in one car can provide. If in a city a certain number of two-man crews are required to cover an area, the same area may be covered by not much more than half that number of men, providing each has a car. Certainly an automobile is cheaper than one man's salary, and it follows that one-man operation, wherever it can be used, is considerably cheaper than two-man operation.